



William Cox, 1773.



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THE
GENUINE LIFE
OF
WILLIAM COX,
The Notorious
ROBBEER,

Who was executed pursuant to his Sentence,
on Wednesday, Oct. 27, 1773.

For Robbing Mr. John Kendrick, of Bank-Notes
and Cash to the Amount of Four Hundred and
Forty Pounds:

CONTAINING

A Recital of some of the most artful Robberies
ever committed in this Kingdom; with an Ac-
count of his Behaviour when under Sentence of
Death in the Cells of Newgate.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. Long, Whitechappel.

(Price 3 )

THE
CENTURY
OF
WILLIAM

ROBERT

Who was executed on Wednesday

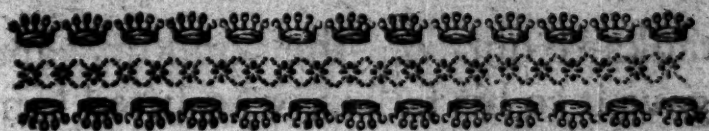
For Robbery and Carrying off
Forty pounds



A Record of one of the most cruel
ever committed in this Kingdom;
court of his Majesty's Bench
Death in the City of London

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. Long, Whitechapel.



T H E
L I F E, &c.

WILLIAM COX, was born in Holywell-lane, Shore-ditch, and the first robbery he ever committed was in company with his father, and it was perpetrated in the following manner: The father and son, who was then a very little boy, were walking through Grosvenor-street, when the old man, observing a silver tankard standing in a window, attempted to steal it; but the railing before the house preventing his reaching it, he hoisted the youth over the rails, who easily took the tankard

tankard out of the window, and gave it to his father, who lifted him back into the street. Thus was this child initiated in the mysteries of iniquity, at a time of life when he was hardly able to distinguish on the propriety, or impropriety of his own conduct.

Immediately after this first adventure with his father, he commenced pick-pocket, and soon became the most dexterous of his profession. In process of time he was so very expert in this business, that it has been a common custom in several public-houses which he frequented, in the neighbourhood of Clerkenwell, to lay wagers that he would pick the pocket of any person in company of his watch, without that person's knowledge, though the party was previously on his guard. In this case young Cox
and

and the party used to walk backward and forward in the room, conversing on indifferent subjects, and Cox never failed to win the wager, by picking the pocket, notwithstanding all the precaution of the other.

He would likewise often pick the pockets of his acquaintance in mere jest, only to shew his dexterity : but he constantly returned the property so obtained.

About seven years ago, when he was confined in Clerkenwell-Bridewell, on a charge of picking pockets, he was so miserably reduced in circumstances, that he was ragged and wretched beyond all description, and his whole body one perfect swarm of vermin ; but of late years he has dressed rather in a gay taste, and has been remarkable

ble neat and decent in his appearance.

Young Cox has, for a considerable time past lived with his uncle in Feather's court, High Holborn, to whose pernicious advice, he is in a great measure indebted for the peculiar distress of his present situation.

It has been a common practice with Cox to watch when the door of any house has been open, and to slip in, and pocket any kind of plate, or other article of value that was light of conveyance; and if he was found in the house, he had always an excuse ready, by which he escaped undetected. If we should relate the tenth part of his rogueries in this way, this account would be swelled to the size of a volume.

About

About four years ago he went into a stationer's shop in water-lane, Fleet-street, and asked for the Begger's Opera, which he said was for his sister. The gentlewoman of the house went up stairs to fetch the play, and in the mean time Cox pocketed a silver spoon. Soon after he was gone the spoon was missed, and, enquiry being made for it, one of the children said " He saw the little master at " play with it." Cox had, at this time, the appearance of a child of ten years of age, though he was then fifteen.

Some time afterwards he slipped up stairs at the grocer's shop, the corner of Long-lane, Aldersgate-street, and secreted a silver-hilted sword. When he was asked, what he had been doing, and having previously learnt the name of the

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child,

child, he said, he had been playing with master Billy; but the sword striking against the steps of the street door, he attempted to make his escape, but being apprehended he was tried for this offence, and had the good fortune to be acquitted.

While he was walking through Hanover-street, he observed a window of a house open, and being previously provided with a tame sparrow, he let it fly into the house, and the door being open, he went in as to seek for it. It happened that there was an old lady in the house, whom hearing, he took refuge in the area, after having filled his pockets with spoons, salts, and other plate. Upon the lady's discovering him there, he burst into tears, and begged she would give him his sparrow, as his
mother

mother would beat him if he went home without it. The lady complied, and the young rascal decamped with his booty.

He once went to the Castle a publick house, near Shorditch church, under pretence of enquiring for Mrs. Robinson, a laundress who lodged there; he easily obtained admittance, and Mrs. Robinson not being at home, he secreted and carried off plate to the amount of fourteen pounds.

While some dust-men were loading a cart in Hanover-square, he got unperceived into the house, and stole some linen, a watch, and two silver candlesticks. For this offence he was afterwards apprehended, and carried before Sir John Fielding, who asking him what he had done with the effects, he answered, ' If had got them,

‘ I should have made broth of
 ‘ them before now, and I dare
 ‘ say they are by this time boiled
 ‘ down.’

At another time he got into the house of a corn-chandler in Fenchurch-street, and stole four bank notes of twenty pounds each, and all the money in the till.

Every boyish trick that he could invent was used as an artifice to help forward the perpetration of his crimes. At one time he got playing at peg-top with a gentleman's son at the door of his father's house, at Stoke Newington; and while the youth was intent on his game, Cox went into the house, and stole a silver pint mug, and six spoons.

On a Sunday, about two years ago, he watched a gentleman's family

family out of their house in Grosvenor-street, then got into the house and stole plate to the amount of fifty pounds, which he carried into Oxford-street, where he took a coach, and conveyed them to his lodgings.

As he had a very boyish appearance, he used frequently to make use of that circumstance to obtain his ends. It had been no uncommon practice with him to play at marbles with young gentlemen before the door of the parents house, and to watch the first opportunity of running in, and committing a robbery.

At a house in Bishopsgate-street, he, in company with a man who called himself capain Davis, and who has been since capitally convicted, but reprieved, robbed the house of a gentleman in Bishopsgate

gate-street, of as much plate at one man could carry.

As Cox was passing through Petty-France, Westminster, a violent shower happened to fall, on which he stood up against the door of a genteel house, the owner thereof observing his genteel appearance, and pitying his situation, obligingly asked him in, and took him into a back parlour. He soon found that nothing could be done in this room, and therefore asked permission to look out of the window of the fore parlour, that he might see his papa, whom he expected to pass through the street; and his request being complied with, he soon found means to secret a silver tea-strainer, and other things, with which he very calmly walked off, after thanking the gentleman for his civility and politeness.

The

The above-named captain Davis and Cox, committed many singular robberies in company together, of which the following are none of the least remarkable.

They went together to the house of an apothecary at Hoxton, and Davis appearing in the character of a gentleman, while Cox acted as servant, the latter went in to ask for his master's bill; and, as the apothecary had served a gentleman of the name of Davis, Cox easily found means to stay in the house till he had secreted a silver pint mug.

About twenty months since, he and Davis agreed on a robbery near Bow, when Cox though not present at the perpetration of the crime, received his full share of the booty. This seems to prove the truth

truth of the old observation, that there is 'honour among thieves.'

Another robbery was committed by these confederates at Chelsea, when, by means of a false key, they stole a considerable quantity of linnen, and two bank-notes for twenty pounds each.

At Upper Holloway, Cox observed a door to stand open, he slipped into the house and stole silver spoons and linen to a considerable amount.

A woollen-draper's shop in Black Friars, was some time since robbed of seventy-six yards of broad cloth; and, though the thief was never brought to justice, his companions well knew he was the perpetrator of the robbery.

Cox, at one time entered and robbed a chandler's shop on Saffron-hill,

hill by means of a false key, which would open almost any door, having no wards, but only a kind of catcher.

By means of a false key of this kind, our hero got into a house in King-street, Wapping, whence he conveyed off linen and plate to a considerable amount;---by the same means he likewise procured admittance in Gun-street, Spital-fields, and robbed the house of silver spoons, salts, and other plate.

Cox observing a servant-maid leave the door of her master's house at Hackney, he slipped in, and robbed it of plate to a large amount.

Captain Davis, as he called himself, attended Cox to the house of a gentleman in Bloomsbury-square,
C where,

where, while the former was conversing with the gentleman, the latter rifled the house of a large quantity of plate.

Our adventurer one morning early got into the shop of an eminent linen-draper in Cheap-side, but the journeyman discovering him, he cried out "Whoop" pretending to be at play at hide and seek; and, as he had the appearance of a child he was suffered to escape, without his conduct being criticised.

It has been a frequent practice with him to procure admission into houses, by obtaining the names of the children of the family, learning where they went to boarding-school, and pertended to be their school-fellow. By this scheme he succeeded so well, that he seldom left the house without bring-

bringing off a valuable prize; and the people of the house seldom suspected the young rogues's tale, till it was too late to detect the thief.

He once got entrance to the lodging of a mantua-maker, at a coach-maker's in Tottenham-court-Road, and stole a quantity of new linen, and a silver spoon; but being like to be taken, he took shelter under the bed, and at length escaped with his booty.

The person who called himself captain Davis once engaged to go with Cox on a filching-party to Windsor. They went on horse-back, appeared as officers, and got up stair at an inn, which they robbed of plate and money to a large amount.

About fifteen mouths since, Cox committed a robbery at the house

house of Mr. West, in Montague-street, Spitalfields: but, being in liquor, he stumbled in coming down stairs, and was apprehended, with a quantity of plate in his possession, and a handkerchief filled with false keys. He would have been tried for this offence, but the Grand Jury threw out the bill.

Cox, having stolen a gold watch at Islington, and being detected, he cried so heartily to go to school, that, in pity to his youth and seeming innocence, he was permitted to go about his business.

From the house of a foreign gentleman in Soho-square, they stole plate, fine linnen, and silk gowns, to a very considerable amount. As soon as this robbery was committed, Davis was stopped

ped in the house ; but he found means to make his escape.

At a house in Leicester-street, they ordered a supper, and, while Davis was eating, Cox went up stairs, and stole two dozen of hats intended for exportation, and other articles of value.

Three weeks before his apprehension, he stole a large parcel of linnen ; but a prosecution was prevented, and the whole affair adjusted through the diligence and interest of a woman who keeps a public house in Rag-street, Clerkenwell, which was much frequented by him and his companions.

He and Davis went to a pawnbroker's shop in the Back-lane, Chelsea, where they fastened the owner into a back-room, and set about rifling the shop : the pawnbroker

broker fired at them, notwithstanding which, they packed up four or five dozen of silk cardinals, and a great number of other things, which they conveyed to a house in Piccadilly.

At another time our hero and Davis, having learned the residence of a Quaker in Red-Lion Market, White-cross-street, they watched the family when they went out to the Meeting on the Sunday following, got into the house, and robbed it of money and cloaths to a very large amount.

A girl kept by Cox used to make a frequent practice of pledging some trifle at the pawn brokers: in a short time she would go to redeem her pledge, and our hero used to attend her. While the pawnbroker was gone up stairs for the effects, he used to take the opportunity

tunity of examining the shop, and seldom failed to carry off goods to the amount of more than twenty times the value of the things which his lady came to redeem.

At the late grand review of the navy at Portsmouth, a multitude of people from all parts resorted to gratify their curiosity, in seeing so uncommon a shew. But the presence of a great number of the nobility, and persons of the first distinction, gentlemen and ladies, shone with a peculiar lustre and brilliancy, and added grandeur to the festivity of the occasion. Cox, we may be sure would not miss so fair an opportunity of exerting his abilities in the exercise of his proper profession. For this purpose he dressed himself in the habit of a midshipman, and in that disguise introduced himself into the best sort of company, and by his artful

artful management, made so good of his time, as to bring off to the value of upwards of £300. in watches, jewels, and other valuable commodities.

He once had an adventure at Paddington, which at the same time that it proves with how much artifice he could act, proves also that his simplicity of conduct was the most exquisite part of that artifice. He was playing, according to his usual custom, with some children at the door of a gentleman's house, the children were called to dinner: our hero, equally brave and cautious, staid till the dinner was ended; and then renewed his play with the young gentlemen; and, while the youths where again engaged in play, he slipped into the house, and stole a very large quantity of plate.

At

At Hommerton, near Hackney, about three years ago, while the door of a gentleman's house was open, the family walking in the garden, and the servant laying the cloth for dinner, he got through the parlour window into the dining-room, and stripped it of all the plate which was laid on the table for accommodating the family at dinner.

Two years ago last Easter, he with some company, went to Epping Forest, to see what is called the Easter Hunt: instead of pursuing his game when the stag was first turned out, he pursued the other game, in search of which, more properly speaking, he was bound; for, while a family was strictly engaged in viewing the sport from the windows, our adventurous

venturer slipped into the House, and pocketed as much plate as he could conveniently carry off. This was done almost in an instant, and Cox immediately galloped after the sportsmen.

It happened that the motion of the horse threw a silver salt out of his pocket, from which circumstance the particulars of the robbery came to be known, even to those who went from London with him.

Captain Davis and he, having entered the shop of a hofier and haberdasher, in Westminster, took the advantage of the master's back being turned, to rob the shop of silk stockings, &c. to a considerable value.

Some few years ago, a man and a woman, who had positively swore against Cox before a justice of

of the peace, swore as positively in his favour at the Old-Bailey, for the consideration of three guineas: nor is this the only instance in which Cox has found the money, which he had acquired by dishonest means, serviceable in the extricating him from those difficulties in which the illegal thirst of that money had involved him.

This offender having been apprehended on a charge of robbing Mr. Kendrick, of bank-notes and cash, to the amount of about four hundred and forty pounds, he was on Wednesday, the eleventh of August last, examined before the bench of justices in Bow-street, when it appeared that Mr. Kendrick (who is a capital dealer in horses, and serves the French kings and the principal nobility of France)

France) had sustained the loss of about the above-mentioned sum; but it did not appear that his lodgings had been broke open, or even the locks of his bureau forced.

It came out in evidence, that, soon after Mr. Kendrick was robbed, Cox called on Claxton, and they agreed to go together into the country.

When they arrived at Reading they purchased a horse; giving in payment for it a bank-note for one hundred pounds, of which Mr. Kendrick had been robbed, and receiving, in part of the change, a bank-note of fifty pounds value, which note Claxton afterwards exchanged at the Bank for three smaller notes, two of which were afterwards found in the possession of Mr. West, the uncle.

(CONTINUED)

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being at that time considered as an accessory, said in his defence, that he had those notes of his wife the day before her death, which happened nearly about the time that Mr. Kendrick lost his property.

On Friday the 10th of August, 1773, William Cox was indicted at the sessions of the peace held at Justice Hall, at the Old-Bailey, when, after a full hearing of what hath been related, he was found guilty.

An account of young Cox's behaviour while under sentence of death in Newgate.

HIS behaviour in Newgate, tho' only nineteen years of age, has been remarkable daring and

and audacious, and the thoughts of his approaching fate seemed not to make any impression on him.

An acquaintance asking him, if there were any probability of his getting a pardon, he replied, he had plenty of money; but if he was hang'd he should not be drowned. At the same time said, if included in the dead warrant, he should see no company, if not, he would make one day's holliday and then go to work again. So indifferent was he about his situation, that he refused to attend chappel.

Indeed on the Sunday before his execution he heard the sermon, but behaved in such a manner, playing with his money, which he said he intended to throw among the mob, as obliged the ordinary to stop and speak particularly to him;

him; and from the time the dead warrant came down till the Monday before his execution, he behaved in the same daring and disorderly manner, but then his boasted courage forsook him, and he desired a clergyman might be sent for, and to all appearance seemed truly penitent.

Having in the first part of this account, omitted the place where young Cox was educated, we think it not unnecessary to inform our readers that what little learning he had, was in Cripplegate School, and that is was but little, will appear from the following letter.

The following is an original Copy of a Letter from young Cox to Claxton, the Evidence against him.

Sir

This Comes with my Sincere and
kind Respects to You hoping this will find
You

You and all the Family well as I at am pre-
sent thanks be to God for it, Tho' no thinks
to You for it, Mr Claxton I think it is Verry
hard of You to Slight me in the Manner You
do, at this Present time, though I never gave
you any Provocation so to do, I take it Verry
hard of you not to send me some little Trifle
of Money as you know I am in great Distress
the Least I think You could Do, was to send
me some little Assistance as You know you
owe me some Money But that is not here or
there I never thought You Could have Used
me in the maner You Do at Present tho' it
serves me Right for my Pains, I hope You
will excuse my being so bold as to write to
You So no more at present from Yours

Wm Cox

Hanged on Tyburn Tree.

[In the Original is an Embleme of a Man
hanging on a Gallows.]

Wm Cox's Bill is Paid Newgate

P S Please to Send me an Answer to this
I have sent you three Letters Since my
Condemnation, Whether You will Do it or
Not.



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